



The Crisis of the Individual and Society in Fin-de-siècle Culture (1880-1920)

Term:	Fall 2022
ECTS credits:	5
Lessons per week:	2 x 90 min
Language:	English
Instructor:	Katalin Nun Stewart, PhD. (kns@katalinstewart.com)
Form of study:	Lecture + class discussion

Prerequisites

No prerequisites needed.

Course description

The end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century witnessed great changes in the way people perceived themselves and their relationship to the society around them in the Western world. This was a period of growth and prosperity in Europe, which saw rapid advances in science and technology; moreover, it was during this period that the social sciences were born and became scholarly disciplines at universities and academies.

Yet, despite this, in most European countries, the atmosphere was shaped by decadence, pessimism, anonymity, alienation, and a doomsday mood. The rise of secular society that had begun after the Enlightenment caused a crisis of faith and a great reduction in the power of the Church. The well-defined world of the bourgeois society of the 19th century came to an end, and people awaited the new century both with a hope of a new beginning and with anxiety and fear.

In this class, we will explore different aspects of this special period of Western civilization. Important new perspectives arose concerning age-old questions such as what is a human being? What is a good life? What is the nature of civilization? What is the nature of religion?

Course objectives

- To develop important skills such as reading primary source texts, formulating and defending one's opinion both in writing and orally, and critical thinking and reasoning
- A strong focus on developing the skills involved in academic writing
- To learn the relevant factual information about this period of Western civilization

This course is interdisciplinary, and the readings come from literature, drama, sociology, psychology, social-political thought, philosophy, and art history.

Office Hours

By appointment.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

The course assessment will consist of the following:

30% One in-class written Midterm exam

35% One in-class written Final exam or a Term Paper. The details will be discussed in class.

30% Three in-class writing exercises (each worth of 10%)

5% Class participation



The exams and the writing exercises are mandatory assignments. The dates of the assignments are written here in the Syllabus, and so please be sure to come to class on these days. Please note that assignments not completed will be considered as failed, and make-up exams or writing exercises will be given only in exceptional and well-documented cases.

The instructor is expected to provide a midterm evaluation to all students.

Grading System

A – excellent:	100-93%
B – very good:	92-84%
C – good:	83-74%
D – satisfactory:	73-63%
E – sufficient:	62-51%
Fx – fail:	50-0%

Passing a course assumes that a student was not absent at more than 4 lessons.

The course consists primarily of readings and in-class discussion. The readings build on one another, and so it is imperative to keep up with them. The class discussion will be dedicated to coming to a better understanding of the texts and to practicing for the exams. For this reason, attendance is mandatory. In accordance with BISLA policy, only four unexcused absences per term will be accepted.

Academic Integrity

In accordance with BISLA's rules for academic ethics, there will be a no tolerance policy towards cheating and plagiarism. The submission of any paper which is not your own work and which does not honestly state the sources used will be regarded as plagiarized. Plagiarism is a serious offense and will automatically result in a failing grade for the course.

Expectations in the Classroom

You may use your computers and tablets in class to take notes or to read the texts, but during the class period it is not permitted to use Wi-Fi or to access the internet. No surfing or texting during class is permitted. Please turn off your cell phones during class.

Texts

Mandatory readings

1. Philosophy, Social Critique, Sociology, Psychology

1. Kagan, Donald, Steven Ozment, and Frank M. Turner, *The Western Heritage since 1648*, New York: Macmillan 1979, pp. 737-740.
- 2.1. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay Science* [1882], trans. by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Vintage Books 1974, § 1 (The teachers of the purpose of existence), § 23 (The signs of corruption), § 56 (The craving for suffering), §§ 108-109 (New struggles; Let us beware), §§ 116-117 (Herd instinct; Herd remorse), §§ 124-125 (In the horizon of the infinite; The madman); § 278 (The thought of death), § 343 (The meaning of our cheerfulness), §§ 352-353 (How morality is scarcely dispensable; The origin of religions), § 358 (The peasant rebellion of the spirit), §§ 373-374 ("Science" as a prejudice; Our new "infinite"), and § 377 (We who are homeless).
- 2.2. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals* [1887], trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, New York: Vintage Books 1989, *First Essay: "Good and Evil," "Good and Bad,"* § 4, §§ 7-13, § 16.



3. James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* [1902], London and New York: Routledge 2004, “Religion and Neurology,” pp. 7-25 and “The Sick Soul,” pp. 103-131.
4. Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* [1912], trans. by Karen E. Fields, New York et al.: The Free Press 1995, pp. 1-8, pp. 201-206, pp. 207-216, pp. 419-425.
5. Freud, Sigmund, *The Future of an Illusion* [1927], trans. by James Strachey, New York: W.W. Norton 1961.

2. Architecture, Fine Arts, Music, and Literature

6. Hobbs, Jack A., *Art in Context*, San Diego et al.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1991, pp. 338-359. Film: [Bride of the Wind](#) (2001), directed by Bruce Beresford, starring: Sarah Wynter, Jonathan Price, Vincent Perez, and Simon Verhoeven Mahler, Gustav, (parts of) Symphony No. 6 (composed in 1903 and 1904) Art Nouveau architecture in the Old City of Bratislava.
7. Ibsen, Henrik, *Ghosts* [1881], in Henrik Ibsen, *The Complete Major Prose Plays*, trans. by Rolf Fjelde, New York: Penguin Books 1978, pp. 197-276.
8. Chekhov, Anton, *The Seagull* [1896], in Anton Chekhov, *The Essential Plays*, trans. by Michael Henry Heim, New York: The Modern Library 2003, pp. 1-58.
9. Stevenson, Robert Louis, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* [1886], ed. by Robert Mighall, London: Penguin 2002, pp. 2-71.
10. Rilke, Rainer Maria, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* [1910], trans. by Michael Hulse, London: Penguin 2009, pp. 3-65.

Topics

1. Philosophy, Social Critique, Sociology, and Psychology
2. Nietzsche
3. James
4. Durkheim
5. Freud
6. READING WEEK
7. Architecture, Fine Arts, Music, and Literature
8. Hobbs
9. Ibsen:
10. Chekhov
11. Stevenson
12. Rilke

Course Schedule (including the deadlines of assignments)

Week	Date	Topic	Reading (pp.)
1.	Sept 19	<p>Course Introduction The Context: Historical Introduction to the Fin-de-siècle Kagan et al., <i>The Western Heritage since 1648</i></p> <p>1. Philosophy, Social Critique, Sociology, and Psychology Nietzsche: <i>The Gay Science</i> [1882] § 1, § 23, § 56, §§ 108-109, §§ 116-117, §§ 124-125</p>	<p>pp. 737-740</p> <hr/> <p>pp. 73-76, pp. 96-98, pp. 117-118, pp. 167-169, pp. 174-175, pp. 180-182</p>
	Sept 21	Nietzsche: <i>The Gay Science</i>	pp. 224-225, pp. 278-280,



		§ 278, § 343, §§ 352-353, § 358, §§ 373-374, and § 377	pp. 295-297, pp. 310-313, pp. 334-340
2.	Sept 26	Nietzsche: <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> [1887] § 4, §§ 7-13, § 16	pp. 27-28, pp. 33-46, pp. 52-54
	Sept 28	James: <i>The Varieties of Religious Experience</i> [1902] (James' Methodology) "Religion and Neurology"	pp. 7-25
3.	Oct 3	1st Writing Exercise James: <i>The Varieties of Religious Experience</i> "The Sick Soul" (The Degrees of the Sick Soul)	pp. 103-116
	Oct 5	James: <i>The Varieties of Religious Experience</i> "The Sick Soul" (The Degrees of Melancholy)	pp. 116-131
4.	Oct 10	Durkheim: <i>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i> [1912] Chapter 6, Sections III-IV	pp. 1-8 pp. 201-206
	Oct 12	Durkheim: <i>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i> Chapter 7, Sections I-II Conclusion, Section I	pp. 207-216 pp. 419-425
5.	Oct 17	2nd Writing Exercise Freud: <i>The Future of an Illusion</i> [1927] Chapters I-III	pp. 5-20
	Oct 19	Freud: <i>The Future of an Illusion</i> Chapters IV-VII	pp. 21-39
6.	Oct 24	Freud: <i>The Future of an Illusion</i> Chapters VIII-X	pp. 40-56
	Oct 26	Midterm Exam	
7.	Oct 31	No Class: Reading Week	
	Nov 2	No Class: Reading Week	
8.	Nov 7	2. Architecture, Fine Arts, Music, and Literature Hobbs: <i>Art in Context</i> Architecture in Bratislava	pp. 338-359
	Nov 9	Film: <i>Bride of the Wind</i> (2001) Fine Arts Music (Mahler, parts of Symphony No. 6)	
9.	Nov 14	Ibsen: <i>Ghosts</i> [1881], Act One	pp. 201-232
	Nov 16	Ibsen: <i>Ghosts</i> , Act Two	pp. 233-259
10.	Nov 21	Ibsen: <i>Ghosts</i> , Act Three	pp. 260-276
	Nov 23	3rd Writing Exercise Chekhov: <i>The Seagull</i> [1896], Acts One and Two	pp. 1-30
11.	Nov 28	Chekhov: <i>The Seagull</i> , Acts Three and Four	pp. 31-58
	Nov 30	Stevenson: <i>Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i> [1886]	pp. 2-25
12.	Dec 5	Stevenson: <i>Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i>	pp. 26-47
	Dec 7	Stevenson: <i>Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i>	pp. 48-70
13.	Dec 12	Rilke: <i>The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge</i> [1912]	pp. 3-25
	Dec 14	Rilke: <i>The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge</i>	pp. 25-46
14.	Dec 19	Rilke: <i>The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge</i>	pp. 46-65
	Dec 21	Final Exam	

*****This syllabus is subject to change.*****